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My name is Coco Newton. I have a private practice, Lifetime Nutrition, LLC, in Plymouth, MI that specializes in integrative and functional medical nutrition therapy. Thank you very much for hearing my testimony. I am a Registered Dietitian (RD) and Certified Clinical Nutritionist (CCN). I would not be able to have the successful private practice if I relied on my dietetics background. I have spent many hours and dollars in continuing education and certification in nutrition. Based on PA 333, I am both a qualified (RD) and unqualified (CCN) practitioner. I understand the world of dietetics and the nutrition world outside of dietetics. I am here to share with you my reasons for supporting HB 4688 to repeal the Dietetics & Nutrition Licensing Law.

I served on the Michigan Board of Dietetics & Nutrition from Fall 2007 until Fall 2013 throughout the rule making process. The statute mandates that all professional members must be Registered Dietitians or licensed by the state, thus no Nutritionists (without the RD credential) have been allowed on the board. There were significant disagreements among us dietitians over the rules.

The field of nutrition cannot be reduced to a single credential, degree, trade association, or organization. Given that the RD is an entry-level credential that only requires a Bachelor's degree and internship, it makes absolutely no sense for my organization (MAND) to be unilaterally acting as the diet police for the state.

In the public arena, when someone seeks a nutritionist or dietitian, they are seeking information and guidance on following a diet and nutrition plan. Nutrition information is already freely available online, in books, TV, and other sources. People choose who they want to see based on their concerns, their philosophy of health, the reputation and expertise of the practitioner. As Rep McBroom stated last week, the RD is one of many nutrition practitioners on a line, a continuum.

What is the difference between a dietitian and nutritionist?

Until last year, our national organization was the American Dietetic Association, and our state organization was the Michigan Dietetic Association. Last year, the names changed to Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics (AND), and the Michigan Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics. (MAND) Then in March 2013, the AND simply told us that we had the option to keep using our old credential (RD) and/or the new one, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). This explains some of the confusion. For today's testimony, when I use the title nutritionist, I am only referring to the non-dietitian. I have yet to meet a nutritionist who refers to themselves as dietitians. However, you will meet more and more dietitians now calling themselves nutritionists.

A good licensure law would license qualified practitioners based on education, training, and examination. We have been accused of wanting to license everyone who wants to practice nutrition. That is completely false. I would never stand here advocating for licensure of uneducated and unqualified persons. When you read the many letters from practitioners, and if you heard the numerous practitioners who gave public comment at our Michigan Board of Dietetics meetings, you would likely be very impressed with their professionalism, levels of scientific and clinical backgrounds, and their concern for patient health and safety. The dietitians portray nutritionists like outlaws that are looming around looking for vulnerable patients to prey upon to advise diets and sell unnecessary and dangerous supplements!

From 1986 – 1988, I was the Licensure Chairperson for the Michigan Dietetic Association. The following quote from the Journal of the American Dietetic Association was our modus operandi:

"Like other professionals, dietitians can justify the enactment of licensure laws because licensing affords the opportunity to protect dietitians from interference in their field by other practitioners. Licensure also can protect dietitians by limiting the number of practitioners through restrictions imposed by academic, experience, and examination requirements. This protection provides a competitive advantage and therefore is economically beneficial for dietitians."

JADA Volume 84, No. 4; April 1984

This quote speaks directly to the monopolistic and anti-competitive intention, which nearly 30 years later, remains the same.

Let's talk about harm to the public. Despite a desperate attempt across the nation to find cases of harm, they rarely surface, if at all. Their reports of harm are anecdotes that read more like "tattle-tales". The collection of harm is promoted, solicited, written up, and submitted by the dietitians. Here's one way they get reports- a contest. (see handout). Members, non-members, diet technicians, students, and interns could all participate in the contest. The prize was a \$200 value admission to the annual dietitian conference.

From a 2012-2013 Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics powerpoint:
Reporting Harm- Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?

If you don't report who will?

You are required to.

Dietetics licensure statutes were written to license you!

If RDs do not report harm, other groups may gain a competitive advantage.

The harm issue is simply fear mongering by the dietitians. Repeat it enough times, exaggerate the projections of danger, conjure up images of unscrupulous quacks and helpless patients and you've created a powerful myth.

Message from some other dietitians that support HB 4688

"The committee has a great responsibility to the citizens of Michigan and also to qualified nutrition practitioners. Too narrow a bill may actually be a disservice to the people of Michigan and to the dietetic profession."

Kathy Rhodes, PhD, RD- Nutrition Lead, Cardiovascular Medicine Domino's Farms, University of Michigan Health Systems

"PA 333 as it currently stands, allowing only registered dietitians to create the guidelines around nutrition counseling and services, would exclude much of the integrative field of nutrition. This would limit access to treatment options and clinicians that hold a diversity of experience and expertise that only enriches the field."

Nancy Raymond, MS, RD, FAARFM- Owner Optimal Health Solutions, LLC
Rochester Hills, MI

"Let's try to push these buttons and make nutrition information available through more sources and from other educated providers."

Kathy Goldberg, MS, RD- Culinary Arts Specialist, University of Michigan Health Systems

We need entrepreneurship and innovative nutrition businesses in Michigan. The dietitian is typically employed by health care institutions, government, academic institutions, food service, and the food industry.

Nationally only 4% of dietitians are employed as business owners. However, nutritionists are most typically found in private clinics and businesses. We need both dietitians and nutritionists in Michigan.

I AM SPEAKING FOR MANY QUALIFIED NUTRITION PRACTITIONERS WHO WORK MOSTLY IN PRIVATE PRACTICE AND IN CLINICS. THEY REPRESENT A VARIETY OF PROFESSIONALS THAT VALUE NUTRITION AS A CORE COMPONENT OF THEIR SERVICES. THEY HAVE OBTAINED CREDENTIALS, CERTIFICATIONS, AND CONTINUING EDUCATION IN NUTRITION. WE NEED THEIR BUSINESSES HERE IN MICHIGAN AND THEIR SERVICES FOR A HEALTHIER MICHIGAN POPULATION. I HAVE COLLEAGUES IN OTHER STATES THAT HAVE BEEN SENT CEASE & DESIST LETTERS, AND HAVE HAD TO CLOSE THEIR PRACTICES. MICHIGAN CAN'T AFFORD TO FOLLOW THIS PATH FOR THE SAKE OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ECONOMY.

Please vote to support HB 4688 to take Michigan forward.